

ARIZONA JUDICIAL BRANCH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIC PLAN: 2013 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Arizona Judicial Branch is using technology to reach its goals of connecting with and protecting the community. Having built the basic infrastructure to support information gathering and sharing, the judiciary is now working to provide the public, the media, law enforcement, and the legal community convenient access to appropriate court information, especially on such sensitive topics as criminal case dispositions and domestic violence matters as well as general case information.

Chief Justice Rebecca White Berch provides direction for both the courts' business and technology efforts. Her vision for the Arizona Judicial Branch is embodied in the publication *Justice 20/20: A Vision for the Future of the Arizona Judicial Branch 2010-2015*.

Justice 20/20

Having built a robust infrastructure and key “back-office” functions, Arizona court automation continues making major improvements through implementation of “second generation” automated systems, continuing the journey to exploit process efficiencies and economies of scale to better serve citizens.

- At the state level, the supporting infrastructure includes the Arizona Judicial Information Network (AJIN), various database and application servers, and the attached PCs with desktop software.
- Back-office functions at the state level include the limited and general jurisdiction case, cash, jury, juvenile and adult probation and other record management systems statewide, email, Internet/Intranet access, and the central data repositories that support public access, statistical reporting, and analysis.
- For larger courts, especially those jurisdictions having their own self-contained tracking systems, back-office functions include continued maintenance, enhancement, and development of local systems, networks, and desktop environments.

Maintaining, operating, and enhancing this infrastructure and back-office functionality remains a priority to allow courts to keep better records, perform case management functions more efficiently and effectively, and promote greater accountability. Some of these back-office applications have reached the end of their useful life and require replacement. A continued focus in this plan is to replace those systems and expand from back office to front office automation while increasing public access to justice-related information.

Arizona courts will continue to improve their business practices, especially ones to better serve the participants in the judicial process, including law enforcement, the legal community, jury members, victims, self-represented litigants, the media, and the public at large. To that end, the *Arizona Judicial Branch Information Technology Strategic Plan: 2013-2015* aligns with the judiciary’s business goals found in the Arizona Judicial publication *Justice 20/20: A Vision of the Future of the Arizona Judicial Branch 2010-2015*, which defines its vision for connecting with and protecting the community.

SERVING THE PUBLIC

Public safety remains a key governing principle that directs automation. Where more complete and timely information is available on criminals, the public is better served. Integration of justice information, especially among criminal justice agencies, supports this goal. The courts continue working for better, closer and more automated interaction with law enforcement, the Department of Corrections, prosecution and defense agencies, as well as social services agencies, integrating with those systems to the extent possible. Criminal justice agencies are able to respond in the best interests of the public when they have ready access to juvenile and adult probation information, orders of protection, arrest information and pending DUI cases. The courts have been building their processes and infrastructure to record this information electronically and

are now focusing, in cooperation with other criminal justice agencies, on sharing information in real-time, especially warrant information.

Being responsive to the public is a key initiative. With enhanced public safety and public service as goals, initiatives include providing for public information access; enhanced “self-service” support for the self-represented, including interactive forms accepted statewide; improved interaction with potential jurors; technological improvements in courtrooms; and an improved ability to interact with the courts remotely. This complements the State of Arizona’s initiative for e-government. The Judicial Branch will continue to use technology to improve its ability to offer service in the e-government arena.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Improving the efficiency of the Judicial Branch processes is an important goal. Several technologies are being implemented to support it. Electronic document management and electronic filing can help the courts manage records more efficiently. The use of audio and video to record court proceedings is another technology solution that is proving both cost-efficient and effective. Use of video conferencing for remote hearings and appearances saves time and transportation costs, and contributes to public safety. Several rural superior courts are continuing to expand its use to address chronic court reporter and interpreter shortages.

Efforts to address the records management challenges of the court system are maturing. The acquisition of electronic document management systems (EDMS) that include abilities for imaging, electronic filing, document storage and document archiving for long-term preservation is complete at the superior court and appellate court levels. Several of the largest limited jurisdiction courts have also selected and implemented electronic document management systems. The focus continuous to be on providing a centralized EDMS along with procedures and processes for more than 100 smaller limited jurisdiction courts that lack the local resources to manage a standalone system. EDMS forms the vital foundation for accepting electronic documents from the public and legal community (e-filing). Automated systems and processes are maturing to the point where a paper “safety net” may not be as vital as it once appeared to be. Since no paper exists for e-filed documents, minimum technical requirements have been communicated to courts desiring to substitute an electronic record for paper “originals.” Business continuity solutions under construction ensure that multiple copies of electronic court records are stored in geographically diverse locations.

With e-government, integration, electronic documents, and other remote electronic access services comes the need for security and authentication. The Judicial Branch will be stepping up its emphasis on the availability of electronic records as paper becomes less prevalent. As mentioned above, the business continuity critical to preserving the electronic supply chain of justice is being put in place. A statewide approach for electronic authorizations and electronic signatures using a systemic, “simplify and unify” approach is still needed. The interactions with state and local

agencies, their needs, and technological capabilities are being reviewed along with internal branch needs to ensure the appropriate controls are in place for different types of filings.

Maintaining a systemic view continues to be a philosophical foundation that requires adoption of a broader perspective, looking at ways not just to meet an immediate need but also examining and revising business processes for global improvements and solutions. The approach encourages questioning structures, terminology, processes, and procedures, as they exist. It promotes solutions that simplify and bring standardization and uniformity to court interactions statewide. It also complements a heightened awareness of our interdependence – among courts and with other government agencies or justice partners.

ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE AND STANDARDS

For the past decade, the direction of technology in the courts has been towards shared resources, standards, and elimination of duplicate efforts and systems. The 2013-2015 Information Technology Strategic Plan continues projects that foster cooperation and leveraging. Leveraging has become institutionalized as a process, yielding a standards-based technology environment. At the recommendation of the Commission on Technology (COT), a statewide committee providing technology oversight, and its subcommittee, the Technical Advisory Council (TAC), the Arizona Judiciary has adopted technical standards for automation statewide so that development can be shared, training leveraged and cooperative projects undertaken. The enterprise architecture includes technical industry standards, protocols, and methodologies, and, where business value can be identified, even products and detailed specifications. Arizona Code of Judicial Administration § 1-505 adopted the architecture. See <http://www.azcourts.gov/cot/EnterpriseArchitectureStandards.aspx> for the details. These detailed standards and specifications provide needed direction to projects conducted at all levels of courts and between courts and justice partners.

STANDARDIZING CODES AND PROCESSES

Automation table code standardization supports statewide uniformity of information recorded in case management systems (CMSs). It is difficult to transfer data to other local and state entities, write standardized reports, and aggregate statewide statistics when every court uses different words, abbreviations, or codes for the same thing. This currently presents a problem in AZTEC courts. Mapping local codes to statewide codes has proven to be very labor intensive with unsatisfactory results. Differences from court to court and bench to bench are being resolved as part of the rollout of the AJACS statewide case management systems. Superior Court Clerks and limited jurisdiction court representatives are well into this standardization effort and have delivered both standard codes and associated terms for use with new case management systems statewide. The COT maintains and governs these standardized codes and terms for all levels of courts through a code standardization subcommittee.

Creation of standardized processing workflows that take into account the size and level of a court is also a COT recommendation. The approach enables more standardized training and less complex automation since fewer unique practices have to be addressed. “Best practices” for courts’ workflow processes are contained within the new case management systems, a direction approved by the Arizona Judicial Council (AJC) several years ago.

NEW SYSTEMS BECOMING REALITY

The drivers for projects to develop and implement second-generation automated systems include:

- Outdated technologies
- Business process inefficiencies
- High maintenance costs and complexities

In the fast-paced world of technology, it is an extraordinary accomplishment to sustain and support an automation system for 10 to 15 years. Many of the courts’ systems are this old and reaching the end of their life cycles. They must be replaced. A project to replace the over-20-year-old JOLTS system using state-of-the-art technology is nearing completion of development and testing activities.

AZTEC, a statewide case management system (CMS) developed in the late 1980’s and implemented in Arizona courts beginning in the early 1990’s, is also in the process of being replaced. Requests for enhancements to AZTEC are being carefully weighed against the likely return on investment over the short remaining life of the program while development work continues on meeting the requirements of limited jurisdiction courts. Implementation of AJACS in rural general jurisdiction courts is complete and enhancements are underway.

COT and steering committees keep close tabs on the CMS development and implementation efforts as they traverse through critical milestones, to ensure that the finished systems meet the processing needs of a vast majority of courts statewide. Oversight also exists for requested enhancements and new releases of the software. The AiCMS system from AmCad, Inc (now called AJACS) has been installed in all 13 rural superior courts is now being enhanced to meet the unique requirements of the limited jurisdiction courts in the state.

Several of the larger municipal courts and consolidated justice courts in the state not using AZTEC also find themselves with end-of-life CMSs and the need to undertake complex development projects to replace them. Adoption of a statewide limited jurisdiction case management system provides the most economical solution to their technology dilemma. They are being involved in the governance, gap analysis, development, and testing efforts.

Simplifying and making more uniform the financial rules and fund allocation procedures remain an important priority. The complexity of the distribution of funds collected by courts increases the challenge of implementing an off-the-shelf vendor court package and makes the maintenance of existing financial systems costly and resource consuming. The judiciary continues to examine financial procedures and statutory requirements to identify ways in which the financial business of courts could be handled more easily. Realistically, courts will not be able to effect change of all the complexity at once. This will be a long-term effort to reduce complexity while resisting efforts or legislation that might introduce additional complexity into the system.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The automation portion of the Penalty Enforcement Program is the Fines, Fees and Restitution Enforcement Project (FARE). One hundred seventy-one courts in all fifteen counties have now implemented the unified FARE process whereby all citations and payments entered into their AZTEC case management system are automatically passed to a collections agency that will:

- Send a reminder notice before the court date (Phoenix only)
- Set up a Web and interactive phone payment service
- Send out delinquency notices
- Perform skip tracing
- Interact with MVD to suspend drivers licenses and vehicle registration renewals (TTEAP)
- Automate the TIP interface
- Set up, bill, and track payment contracts
- Provide outbound calling for further collections effort after noticing has completed.

FARE has collected over \$265 million to date on outstanding local debts, disbursed to statutory funds at the local, county, and state levels. Of that amount, \$72 million has been collected via electronic media, the Web, and telephone IVR. Over 669,800 TTEAP holds have been placed with just over 354,500 releases, thus far, a release rate of 52.9 percent.

FUNDING CHALLENGES

The judiciary faces many challenges in pursuit of these strategic initiatives. Perennially among the greatest challenges, funding looms even larger in the wake of implementing a new case management system in general jurisdiction courts and undertaking development of systems for case management in limited jurisdiction courts and for electronic case filing statewide. In addition, a more capable data center was recently constructed to support new centralized applications and provide necessary business continuity. Achieving justice integration and statewide electronic access to critical court

information requires coordination of efforts, detailed standards, and funding. This is difficult with funding so limited and dispersed among so many different entities statewide. The problem was compounded over several years when the planned funding for many initiatives was interrupted by multiple reallocations of JCEF (a state-level automation funding source) by the legislature. Courts are working to enhance both local and centralized pools of automation funding to leverage the success of what has already been built and carry the judiciary forward in a consistent way to support its goals of improving public safety and public service. Although funding streams currently in place are projected to enable development, testing, and implementation of the new limited jurisdiction court case and cash management system, any further fund sweeps or dramatic reductions in revenue could jeopardize the completion of the project and/or the on-going support required to maintain this vital statewide automation system.

TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES

The Arizona Judicial Branch's information technology initiatives support its strategic agenda outlined in *Justice 20/20: A Vision of the Future of the Arizona Judicial Branch 2010-2015*. At its June 2012 strategic planning session, the Commission on Technology reaffirmed the importance of existing strategic projects while introducing some new projects into the mix. Strategic projects were placed in three general tiers of priority, as indicated below:

Top Tier eFiling

- Civil eFiling Maricopa/Pima
- Judge Automation
- AJACS- eFiling

Top Tier Court Automation

- AJACS-LV/Mesa
- JOLTSaz- Pima
- FARE
- AJACS-AZTEC Replacement
- AJACS- GJ Enhancements

2nd Tier

- eDocs
- JOLTSaz- Rural
- APETS Integration
- eWarrants
- AzTurboCourt- DR
- AzTurboCourt- Criminal

The *Arizona Judicial Branch's Information Technology Strategic Plan: 2013-2015* reflects technology planning for all Arizona courts. Typically, State Appellate Courts and the Superior Court in each county, on behalf of their general and limited jurisdiction

courts, prepare or update their information technology strategic plans as the foundation for the statewide planning process. Due to the continuing economic challenges government is facing, the Commission on Technology voted to require formal plan input from rural courts only every other year. Those accomplishments and directions received in the current planning cycle have been incorporated into the statewide technology activities coordinated by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The most recent individual plans or updates received by county appear in Appendix D.